

(Washington, DC)— The United States House of Representatives today passed a Moore amendment that would protect historic veterans' grounds in Milwaukee from potential commercial development. Specifically, the amendment to the Military Construction and Veterans Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2010 would prohibit funds from being used to process new leases for commercial development on historic veterans' property. These leases are known as Enhanced Use Leases (EUL).

"Milwaukee's historic soldiers' home site was established after the Civil War and these buildings are still standing today," Congresswoman Moore said. "The history surrounding these buildings is rich, and their value to Milwaukee veterans, their families and future generations cannot be understated. We should protect this soldiers' home site for veterans' purposes, and prohibit it from being taken away from the use or benefit of servicemen for the sake of commercial development."

On March 3, 1865, Congressional legislation established the concept of a National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in Milwaukee, which was built for officers and men of the U.S. volunteer forces who had been totally disabled by wounds received or sicknesses contracted during the Civil War. This soldiers' home in Milwaukee became designated the Northwestern Branch of a national network of 11 soldiers' homes across the country, which was eventually integrated into the Veterans Administration when it was established in 1930. Built in 1867, the Milwaukee Soldiers' Home was one of three original sites; the other two were located in Maine and Ohio. The Moore amendment would protect the three oldest homes, including Milwaukee's, from EULs for commercial development.

In 2006 and 2007, the three original soldiers' homes that were built as part of the National Asylum, including Milwaukee's, celebrated 140 of providing service to veterans.

In late 2005, Congresswoman Moore was notified that the VA and the city of Milwaukee were discussing an Enhanced Use Lease proposal that would have allowed for commercial development of many buildings located on the Milwaukee VA grounds, against the strong wishes of the Milwaukee veterans' community.

"These buildings – national treasures – should be preserved for veterans' purposes, future generations of veterans, their families and the interested public," Congresswoman Moore said.

Congresswoman Moore worked with the Allied Council of Veterans and their members to arrange a townhall meeting with the VA in August 2006, so that veterans' organizations could make their concerns about commercial development heard. Hundreds of veterans attended the meeting, and asked VA officials to protect the historic soldiers' home. The city of Milwaukee eventually withdrew from the discussions surrounding private development of VA grounds, but the veterans' community has maintained a strong interest in ensuring that the VA sites and their buildings are protected.

Currently, the Milwaukee Soldiers' Home is on the National Park Service list to earn a place on the National Register of Historic Places. This designation will also help protect against any attempts to lease these historic Civil War era buildings for commercial purposes.

View video of Congresswoman Moore on the House floor TODAY speaking about protecting VA grounds in Milwaukee: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pqLdaUkc4k&feature=channel_page

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